

“Pavements grey of the imprisoning city”: the articulation of a pro-rural and anti-urban ideology in the Youth Hostels Association (YHA) in the 1930s¹

Michael Cunningham

University of Wolverhampton, UK

Abstract

The YHA was a self-professed non-political organisation that promoted the provision of cheap accommodation for walkers and cyclists. Despite this non-political stance, the literature of the YHA in the 1930s reveals a consistent pro-rural and anti-urban ideology. This article examines the articulation of this ideology and locates it both within a longer tradition of such sentiments in England and also within the social and cultural concerns of the decade.

Keywords

Youth hostels, ideology, walking, rambling, ruralism, urbanism

Introduction

Since at least the Romantic period of the late eighteenth century, there has been a strong ideological strand in England of pro-ruralism and anti-urbanism, the cultural and literary manifestation of which has been detailed in Raymond Williams' *The Country and the City*.²

This ideology involves a somewhat diffuse and amorphous set of ideas and sentiments linked by the belief that the countryside or rural life is in some way 'better' than the city: the former

Corresponding Author:

Michael Cunningham, Faculty of Social Sciences, Millennium Building, City Campus South, University of Wolverhampton, Wolverhampton, WV1 1LY
Email: m.cunningham @wlv.ac.uk

embodies or represents the 'true' or 'real' England while the latter is artificial; the rural embodies spiritual qualities while the city represents materialism or degeneracy; the countryside has an aesthetic superiority. Obviously, these are generalisations and the specific content of the ideology varies over time and with the groups or individuals articulating it. This article will focus on aspects of articulation of this ideology in the 1930s. However, for context, some general points will be made about the ideology that are not temporally specific. First, it is methodologically difficult to measure how dominant this ideology was or is. What is clear is that it has not been unchallenged and there have been successive political or cultural movements and individuals that have critiqued or rejected these ideas in favour of industrial advance or a defence of technological change. Disparate examples include proponents of Victorian industrial capitalism, the writings of George Orwell and H. G. Wells, the rhetoric of Harold Wilson's 'white heat of the technological revolution' and New Labour 'modernisation'.³ Second, as recorded by Martin Wiener, this ideology crosses political boundaries in that important figures of both left and right have been associated with it.⁴ William Morris, Edward Carpenter and Robert Blatchford are frequently invoked as left-wing representatives and Matthew Arnold, Thomas Carlyle and George Meredith are cited as examples of prominent conservative figures. Additionally, there is an important strand of anti-urbanism and anti-modernity in far-right British politics, especially in the inter-war years. Although the British Union of Fascists (BUF) had modernising and technocratic tendencies, its leader Oswald Mosley frequently railed against the city and invoked the countryside as the true England and its agricultural spokesman, Jorian Jenks, was a promoter of organic farming and an anti-modernist. Anti-urbanism in the BUF was perhaps most strongly embodied in Henry Williamson, best known as the author of *Tarka the Otter* (1927). Among the non-BUF far-right, groups like the English Mystery and its successor the English Array promoted a series of pro-rural and anti-modernist policies.⁵

It should be noted here that anti-modernity is difficult to define exactly and involved an eclectic mix of policies and prejudices. For the Right, anti-modernity often involved elements of anti-industrialism on aesthetic grounds; an antipathy toward capitalist exchange relations and the socially unrooted, selfish individualism they identified with modernity; and a distaste for the rise of democracy. Additionally, contemporary cities were often viewed as repositories of immigrants and those weakening the British 'stock'.⁶ By contrast rural society provided, or was held to provide, an organic connection to the land and a stable social order of benefit to all. The Left shared the first two critiques but were, generally, much more favourable towards democracy and less likely to romanticise feudal society and the social relations therein. In this sense, Left anti-modernity was less pro-rural than that of Williamson and the English Mystery and English Array. However, the visions of Blatchford, Carpenter and, to a lesser extent, Morris embraced the restoration of the agrarian or of small-scale artisan production. Many others on the Left accepted that industrialisation and the industrial city could not be destroyed or superseded but preferred the aesthetic and the supposedly enduring values of the countryside.

There is also both a 'high' and 'lower' cultural representation of this ideology. There is a tradition in both 'highbrow' (for want of a better term) literature and more popular/populist literature of venerating or idealising the countryside/the rural. In the more contemporary period, television series including *All Creatures Great and Small* (1978–1990), *The Darling Buds of May* (1991–1993) and *Heartbeat* (1992–2010) have portrayed positive, romanticised or idealised visions of rural life. The title of the documentary series about relocation *Escape to the Country* (2002–present) is revealing in the implication of the city as a prison; it is difficult to envisage a similar series entitled *Escape to the City*.⁷ It may be, however, that this ideology is weakening in a more multi-cultural Britain: it has less purchase

among British people of immigrant background who overwhelmingly live in cities and may not share the romanticised view of the countryside.⁸

The YHA and the context of the ideology

The objective of this article is to detail the articulation of anti-modernity within the two principal national publications of the YHA. These were the annual *Handbooks* for members and the quarterly journal *YHA Rucksack*.⁹ The YHA was founded in 1930. Its objective was ‘to help all, but especially young people to a greater knowledge, use and love of the countryside, particularly by providing hostels or other simple accommodation for them in their travels’.¹⁰ By September 1939 it had a membership of 83,418 and a complement of 297 hostels.¹¹ To give some context to its foundation, three trends that can be traced back to the late nineteenth century influenced the establishment of the YHA: the provision of rural holidays and leisure opportunities by organisations such as the Co-Operative Holidays Association (CHA) founded in 1897 and the Holiday Fellowship (HF) founded in 1913; the popularity of recreational walking and cycling with new federal structures developing in the 1930s among rambling societies; and the concern for the preservation of buildings and the countryside represented, in particular, by the founding of National Trust in 1895. Organisations representing these three trends had institutional links as affiliates with the YHA and there was a large degree of overlapping membership and activism.¹²

In addition to contextualising its foundation, it is useful to locate the YHA within two of the important cultural concerns and social policy issues of the inter-war period. One of these is the discussion about leisure and the use of leisure time conducted *inter alia* by intellectuals, social reformers and voluntary organisations.¹³ This is a large topic so the focus here will be on elements of the discussion about and policy towards leisure in which the YHA was particularly involved. As will be seen below, the YHA was concerned not just with

promoting walking but also with locating walking within the tradition of it being a 'good' form of leisure and a 'good' use of leisure time. There was a concern among some commentators and reformers in the inter-war period that certain forms of leisure were passive, debilitating and/or failed to contribute to the development of good citizens.¹⁴ These concerns were often, implicitly or explicitly, related to working-class predilections for gambling and drinking and also, for conservative commentators, to the invidious influence of mass entertainment, often of American provenance, like the cinema. The strong Quaker and non-conformist influence on leading figures in the YHA predisposed them towards the improving aspects of walking as a leisure pursuit, which combined physical activity, spiritual regeneration, self-reliance and a fellowship with others. It should be noted that this was not a new development. In the late nineteenth century, walking was often combined with education in relation to geological or botanical study and investigation. In the inter-war period, with the perceived need for social reconstruction and increasing leisure time for many, concerns about how citizens used leisure time were forged anew.

As well as providing institutional support for the pursuit of 'good' leisure, the YHA promoted trips for the unemployed at reduced rates, although the 'takeup' by the unemployed was less than the YHA had hoped.¹⁵ Such support reflected the philanthropic nature of the YHA and its reformist political orientation. However, this support can also be situated alongside another issue found in the 1930s consideration of leisure: the concern that the 'enforced leisure' of the unemployed would lead either to their demoralisation and apathy or their participation in less edifying forms of leisure.¹⁶

These dispositions and interventions were reinforced by the YHA's integration into a network of agencies and institutions concerned with the promotion of leisure, the consideration of citizenship and the education and opportunities underpinning it. For example, the National Council of Social Service, founded in 1919 to coordinate voluntary

work and social provision, was important in the establishment of the YHA. The YHA also had close links to the Educational Settlements movement, the Workers' Education Association, Toynbee Hall and various 'outdoor' groups either through the overlapping activism of office-holders or through organisational affiliation.¹⁷

The second important issue of the 1930s, to which the YHA contributed and from which it benefitted, was concern over the nation's health. The physical and psychological claims for walking will be addressed later in the article. Given its charitable and non-governmental status, the YHA was well-placed to contribute to one of the objectives of policy-makers in Britain, which was to improve health and fitness without adopting the coercive and statist characteristics associated with the movement in Nazi Germany after 1933. The YHA received financial support from several charities including the Jubilee Trust—established in 1935 to mark the silver jubilee of George V. The connections between fitness, education and citizenship that resonated in the YHA were echoed in George V's broadcast about the Trust:

It is to the young that the future belongs. I trust that through the Fund inaugurated by my dear son the Prince of Wales to commemorate this year many of them throughout this country will be helped *in body, mind, and character to become useful citizens*.¹⁸

As health and the 'good' use of leisure were often connected, it is unsurprising that the YHA also had many institutional linkages with organisations promoting health. As well as the holiday organisations and 'outdoor' associations indicated above, affiliates for a short period included some of the more esoteric organisations such as the Kibbo Kift and the Sunlight League.

Comment [PV1]: Was there a particular event that took place in 1934 that made Britain more aware of Nazi Germany's promotion of health and fitness? Otherwise, should this read "1933"?

Having sketched a very general overview of a pro-rural and anti-urban ideology, it is necessary to provide more context for its articulation within the YHA in the 1930s. Two observations about the 1930s are significant in relation to this. First, Richard Overy has argued that the inter-war period in Britain was one of crisis, uncertainty, insecurity and pessimism with intellectuals and others looking to political ideologies such as Communism or Fascism or movements like eugenics or psychoanalysis as routes to salvation. Interestingly, Overy does not consider the anti-urban, back-to-the-land movement and associated tendencies in his work.¹⁹ As will be shown below, at least some of the discourse within YHA publications echoes and articulates these fears. Second, the articulation of the language about the countryside within the YHA in the 1930s has to be considered in the context of two important concerns of that decade: one being the threat to the rural by urban and suburban sprawl; the second being the increasing use of cars for trips to the countryside. These concerns went beyond the confines of the YHA, but were an important influence on it. Patrick Abercrombie, a vice president of the YHA, was an important figure in the planning of land use; architect Clough Williams-Ellis, who was a YHA member and architect of at least one hostel, wrote one book and edited another critiquing urban and suburban sprawl.²⁰ Another notable figure was the philosopher and broadcaster Cyril (C. E.M.) Joad who was a rambling activist and a campaigner against the despoliation and improper use of the countryside.²¹

Within YHA publications 'nature' is invoked more frequently than the 'countryside' although it is not always clear whether that invocation has significance. It is an obvious point that 'nature' or the 'natural' is not the same as the rural or the countryside since even the wilder parts of England and Wales have been shaped by human activity or husbandry. Nature manifested, for example, in the presence of particular breeds of birds or varieties of trees and flowers is at least a partial product of human influence. Although detailed consideration is

beyond the scope of this article, it is worth noting that for some advocates of the rural the wilderness unaltered by humans is the ideal and encapsulates sublime, 'untamed' nature. This tradition is associated with William Wordsworth and the Romantics in England and Henry David Thoreau, John Muir and the National Parks movement in the USA. Another tradition or strand emphasises that the organic connection between 'man' (humans) and nature is the ideal to be pursued or the lost way of living to be revived. The latter is a principal element in the 'back to the land' movement of the 1930s and at least two important figures in it, Rolf Gardiner and Harold John (H. J.) Massingham, contributed to YHA publications.²² Gardiner was, among other things, a farmer, promoter of folk music, open-air camps, hiking and a member of the English Mistery and the English Array. Massingham was a journalist and author whose works include *Cotswold Country* and *Chiltern Country* in the Batsford series 'The Face of Britain' and he wrote the introduction to the Oxford University Press edition of Flora Thompson's classic rural trilogy *Lark Rise to Candleford*. In the early 1940s he was associated with Gardiner in **Kinship in Husbandry**, an organisation which promoted organic farming as the basis for rural revival, most of whose membership was associated with right-wing ideas concerning renewing the British 'stock' and opposing the development of the welfare state.²³ Massingham specifically noted that the English countryside was not 'natural' but rather the creation of an 'ages-long association' between man and nature.²⁴

It should be noted that anti-urbanism is more specifically an attack on the industrial city. Industrialism is sometimes mentioned; sometimes it is implicit. One never infers that the venerable university or ecclesiastical cities are the object of criticism; it is not Durham, Salisbury, Cambridge or Canterbury that are denounced.²⁵ One infers that the aesthetically more pleasing and largely non-industrial nature of these cities sets them apart in what is more specifically an attack on modern industrial centres.

Comment [PV2]: This needs an explanation. Not sure what this movement or organisations is.

If anti-urbanism is more specifically an indictment of industrial cities, so too the pro-ruralism of the YHA can be rendered more specific. It is impossible to know the landscape preferences or the aesthetic rural ideal of all YHA members. However, there is evidence that many important figures in the YHA valued mountains over other English (and Welsh) landscapes. Lake District or Snowdonia were the exemplars. Again, one never infers that paeans to the English landscape endorse the marshes of Essex or the fenlands of Cambridgeshire.²⁶

As a slight digression, it is worth detailing the importance of those two upland areas for the YHA. Both had relatively high numbers of hostels and Snowdonia was the chosen area of hostel expansion by the important and early-formed Merseyside Region. Among leading figures, vice-president Thomas Arthur (T. A.) Leonard, founder of both the CHA and HF, had connections with North Wales and was a founding member of the Friends of the Lake District in 1934 along with Henry Herbert (H. H.) Symonds, vice chair of the National Executive Committee (NEC) from 1933 to 1938 and Abercrombie.²⁷ In 1937 Leonard wrote: ‘I write these words with the feeling of one who has the vision of those glorious northern hills in Derbyshire, Wales, Lakeland and the far-off Highlands of Scotland. No holiday seems to have quality like those spent among them’.²⁸ George Macaulay (G. M.) Trevelyan, the historian and president of the YHA, expressed a preference for moors and mountains, had a farm in the Lake District and a strong connection to the Cheviots as his family home was in Wallington, Northumberland. Symonds considered mountain walking to be the ‘best of all pastimes, without controversy or exception’ and the Lake District to be the finest landscape in England. On taking early retirement, he moved there and was a leading activist in the Friends of the Lake District. Symonds preferred the Lake District, according to Taylor, but knew Snowdonia well—as evidenced by his writing of the first article, about the Snowdon circuit, in the *YHA Rucksack* series ‘The Ways of Britain’.²⁹ In the 1930s, William Temple

was Archbishop of York and a vice-president of the YHA and an obituary, written in 1945 by Barclay Baron, NEC chairman from 1930 to 1937 noted that the Lakes were his favourite place to walk.³⁰ John Major, NEC chairman from 1937 to 1939, moved to the Lake District from Lancashire in retirement and was also a Friend of the Lake District until ill-health forced him to move south.

As indicated above, it is impossible to know the landscape preferences of all YHA members although it is plausible to believe that mountains were a preferred landscape for many of them. There is a variety of reasons why mountains appeal. Frank Smythe (see below) was a leading mountaineer of the period, involved in three Everest expeditions and an author of many books on the subject. In the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, it is stated that his writing of mountain experiences had a ‘mystical, quasi-religious tone’, one that is reflected in the contemporary period by Robert Macfarlane who has emphasised the wonder and spiritual sense mountains induce in many of their adherents.³¹

Other reasons include the physical challenge, the need for some to ‘conquer’ the peaks or the aesthetic attraction of the views obtained. These factors may have disposed many to ‘head for the hills’ if time and money permitted. One indication, though not conclusive, that YHA members might have disdained the flatlands was a spirited defence of East Anglia by the Honorary Secretary of the Regional Group who believed that it was commonly seen as ‘flat, featureless and uninteresting’.³² It is also possible that members had a specific identification with their locality. Both Melanie Tebbutt and John Walton have recorded that ramblers and walkers often had strong attachments to their local areas.³³

The final point to be made is that the YHA promoted and prized a specific form of engagement with nature or the countryside. For example, both visiting the country solely to look and touring by car were not considered worthy activities—ones that were rapidly increasing in the 1930s as motoring organisations promoted the drive to the country.³⁴ A

recurring theme is that the virtues and benefits of the countryside are to be found in the physical engagement with it. For some leading figures, in particular Trevelyan and Leonard, it was specifically walking that was recommended. Although the YHA catered for cyclists, walking is sometimes held up as the exemplar of physical exercise. The reasons are not always explicit although the inference is that walking is both more 'natural' in that it does not involve using a machine and that the pace of walking is both 'natural' and allows a better appreciation of the countryside. According to Richard Schirrmann, the German founder of the YH movement, '*to travel on foot through the countryside is to live*.'³⁵ Of course, for those who valued mountains above any other landscapes walking had the very practical advantage of providing access where cycles could not.

Having outlined the context of pro-ruralism and anti-urbanism in the YHA, the following sections will provide examples of this articulation in two national YHA publications: the annual *Handbook* for members and the quarterly journal *YHA Rucksack* (sometimes entitled *Rucksack*).³⁶ Examples will be reproduced verbatim to allow readers to gain a flavour of the pieces. The *Handbook* cost 6d throughout the 1930s and had dimensions of approximately five inches by seven inches. The first one, published in 1931, contained 32 pages and from 1935 all editions were over 100 pages long, reflecting the increase in the number of hostels. The main purpose of the *Handbook* was to provide for members a comprehensive list of hostels, information on how to book and the regulations of the organisation. As well as this practical information, it contained cultural commentary on the town and country and news and endorsement of other organisations that the YHA supported. Examples of these include the National Trust, the Campaign for the Protection of Rural England, the Commons, Open Spaces and Footpath Preservation Society, the CHA and the HF. There appear to be no accurate records of its circulation. However, as it contained the

directory of hostels necessary to plan a holiday, it can be assumed that most members subscribed to it.

YHA Rucksack was first published in 1932. It was published quarterly, costing 3d per issue or 6d for an annual subscription. It had dimensions of approximately six and a half by nine inches. It contained 16 pages until 1934 when it expanded to 32 pages. It contained news of YHA policy, international linkages including hostel restoration and walking trips, reports on regional activity, book reviews and a series on walking in different parts of Britain entitled 'The Ways of Britain'. *Rucksack* and its successor magazines were published for many years, suggesting that a large body of YHA members subscribed.

It is not my claim that there is necessarily unanimity in conceptions and articulations among the leading figures or that all the members would embrace these views. However, it is plausible to suggest that the consistent appearance of variations on the ideology of pro-ruralism and anti-urbanism indicates a positive reception among some of the readership. As indicated above, it seems that there is no comprehensive record of the politics or the landscape preferences of the rank-and-file membership. *YHA Rucksack* published readers' letters. However, the majority of these tended to be concerned with more mundane matters rather than with ideological questions. For example, the relative merits of walking and cycling, the behaviour of school parties, the attitude of wardens and standards of hostels often constituted the topics of the letters page.

Pro-ruralism

This section will consider the articulation of a pro-rural ideology in relation to walking, subdivided into the positive effects on the individual and on the collective. The benefits of rural walking for the individual were manifold. The physical benefits and aesthetic pleasures were sometimes stressed—although perhaps largely taken for granted. Three other benefits

can be divided into the spiritual, the mental and the moral. This is a somewhat crude categorisation and the five elements often overlap in the contributions and articulations but it captures most of the claims made. For example, in the context of the National Government's physical fitness campaign, Trevelyan addressed the National Council of the YHA in 1938. 'Physical fitness is a proper criterion but not an end in itself. We want Physical Fitness as a necessary means to mental and spiritual fitness'. After citing the poet Robert Browning, he continued: 'I know for my part that I only feel that sense of spiritual unity with the universe and acceptance of life and oneness with God—I care not what terms you use for it—never so fully as when I have exercised my body to the full by a hard walk through the country.'³⁷ Trevelyan emphasises the link between the physical and the spiritual and the inadequacies of the charabanc trip in the first *Handbook*: 'to be whirled in a crowd of others to a beauty spot, leave your litter there, and be whirled home, is not to see nature, to feel it inwardly to be one with it. Any youth demands exercise of its limbs if its spirit is to function.'³⁸ Trevelyan linked together the various benefits in a *YHA Rucksack* editorial in 1939: 'unless we can take young people out of the cities on their holidays and at week-ends, to use their limbs and eyes, and exalt their hearts and clean their minds *in the presence of nature*, we shall degenerate apace.'³⁹ Similar sentiments are offered by Temple who claimed in the foreword to the 1934 *Handbook* that Youth Hostels made a contribution to the country's social and spiritual welfare. In an address to the National Council meeting of 1939, he argued that spiritual health depends on 'getting out'.⁴⁰ The author Llewelyn Powys indirectly referred to such spiritual benefits when he claimed that 'close contact with Nature can restore peace to a troubled mind more surely than anything else'.⁴¹

It is worth noting here that what constitutes the spiritual element claimed is rather vague. Such ambiguity may be part of its appeal. Lightness of spirit is also referred to. Baron claimed that 'ours is to be considered in essence as a "spiritual" movement in the wide

sense—a movement, that is, with a true and joyful spirit behind it and within it and spreading from it.⁴² A sense of inner peace, calm or ‘restedness’ is compatible with a wide range of other beliefs or dispositions. For example, the title of Powys’ article and his invocation of Pan within it indicate a pagan-influenced conceptualisation and Trevelyan’s phrasing above indicates a conceptualisation of the spiritual beyond the theistic. However, many of the leading members of the YHA were Quakers and may have associated the spiritual qualities of the rural with God’s work. Others certainly articulated this. In his endorsement of the YHA, Robert Baden-Powell, for example, hoped that members would thank God for the gift of the countryside.⁴³

As well as spiritual refreshment or peace, walking helped improve reflection and mental processes.⁴⁴ An occasional contributor, R. S. Rogers claimed that ‘the open air and the open road help to create an open mind which is what is needed for the solution of modern problems’.⁴⁵ This position echoed a contribution by Temple who thought that the ‘problems of our hectic civilisation may yet be solved by walkers; solvuntar ambulando’.⁴⁶ As indicated above, Trevelyan also asserted a link between physical activity and the development of mental processes.

A final category of improvement was the moral. This needs to be understood in the context of the YHA being a ‘respectable’ organisation sensitive to suggestions that the sexes rambling together could lead to impropriety. The Quaker and non-conformist influence within the movement gave it an earnest and occasionally priggish air for some of its detractors.⁴⁷ In response to a church dignitary’s concern about propriety, a *YHA Rucksack* editorial of 1933 stated: ‘folk who loved the open air, who could tramp their twenty miles with full kit, and cook their own food at the end of the day—were a darned sight cleaner in mind and body than quite a lot of folk I could mention’.⁴⁸ Admittedly, there is some ambiguity in whether the YHA attracts the ‘moral’ types or whether it fosters this moral

sense. However, the Reverend Dick Sheppard in a later editorial argued that hiking was not morally dangerous and that 'vigorous outdoor exercise is in itself a way of keeping moral, as well as physical, health'.⁴⁹ Trevelyan also alluded to the cleaning of minds.

It was claimed, therefore, that the countryside, or more specifically walking in it, provided physical, aesthetic and spiritual reward and fostered mental and moral development.

However, the benefits did not only accrue to individuals; it also led to improvements, or potential improvements, in the collective or relations between groups. Fundamental to many constructions in the YHA is the improvement of the Rambler as a person and as a member of the community.⁵⁰ Three different versions of this claim can be identified. Walking in the context of the YHA ethos and organisation could foster fellowship and *esprit de corps*; it could overcome various social or cultural divisions; and it could help in the promotion or maintenance of international peace. These will be considered in turn, though there is a degree of overlap.

In 1935, the mountaineer Frank Smythe claimed that national decadence had never occurred in peoples who rejoiced in nature. Trevelyan had also used the term 'decadence'. In the 1930s the concern with physical deterioration and related issues such as eugenics were not necessarily a right-wing concern.⁵¹ Smythe also claimed that the YHA 'symbolized in a very practical fashion common ideals of good fellowship and peacefulness' and that, of comradeship, there was 'none finer than that cemented in the quiet heart of nature'.⁵² For Rogers, the Christian values that imbued the YHA manifested themselves through fellowship and service.⁵³ Trevelyan claimed that the development of the individual, morally and spiritually, could also lead to the development of a sense of the responsibilities of citizenship.⁵⁴

In the first *Handbook*, Barclay Baron outlined six aims of the Association. Four of them were: the promotion of the health of body and mind; an increased enjoyment of the

countryside; the preservation of the countryside including the protection of birds and flowers; the promotion of freedom for youth under guidance, standards of behaviour being maintained by the *esprit de corps* of the movement rather than excessive discipline.⁵⁵ The sixth aim included the following statement: ‘Our movement has a contribution to make, on the most natural terms, to a better understanding between the younger people of different classes, opinions and nationalities . . . and there is no greater safeguard for the future against strife, *whether industrial or international*, than the deep-seated friendship between very different of people which can be begun in the freedom of the open air’.⁵⁶ Interestingly, there is both a domestic emphasis in this claim with the reference to industrial strife and the hope for the reduction of class tensions and an international emphasis with the reference to reducing strife between nations.

Comment [SR3]: Please rephrase for clarity.

The importance of the physical space of the Common Room in hostels, in terms of both the interactions that took place in it and the bridging of class divisions that such interactions facilitated, was emphasised by Oliver Coburn in his history of the movement published in 1950. ‘This is the environment in which all classes and types can mingle successfully, the son of an employer with the son of an employee, the labourer and the clerk, the countryman and the townsman, the shy (now emboldened) and the hearty, the young and the old’.⁵⁷ The significance of the common room in the YHA drew heavily on the Educational Settlements run by Quakers and the official journal of the movement was called the *Common Room*. As well as Coburn, Egerton St John (‘Jack’) Catchpool, honorary secretary and then Secretary of the NEC—one of the most significant figures in YHA development—emphasised the role of the common room in promoting fellowship.⁵⁸ Two points should be emphasised here: first, the context of a febrile domestic and international political environment of the 1930s in which it was hoped the YHA could play a unifying and conciliatory role and, second, the role of the common room. In the Youth Hostel Common

Comment [PV4]: I think we need first names (preferably rather than initials) for individuals mentioned for the first time throughout—including in the endnotes.

Room, the benefits to and developments of individuals through rural walking, alone or in groups, would be reinforced by the democratic, tolerant and consensual ethos of that shared space. The educative element and conciliatory role of the YHA was also emphasised by the historian John Lawrence (J. L.) Hammond, who drew an analogy with the cosmopolitan nature of universities in the Middle Ages. 'The YHs may thus be a nursery of a true League of Nations, teaching liberty, equality and fraternity to an age in which race and class, religion and politics, are too often symbols of passion and illwill.'⁵⁹

Reflecting inter-war concerns, the furthering of international understanding and the hoped-for effect on international relations is another theme frequently found in the literature.⁶⁰ In 1933, a *YHA Rucksack* editorial declared: 'the world is full of fear, suspicion and doubt. To go simply as a wanderer from one country to another, making casual wayside friendships, learning strange customs, talking, trying to understand and sympathise—that is perhaps the greatest contribution towards world peace that the individual can make. Never was that contribution more needed than it is to-day'.⁶¹ In an editorial of later that year, Claude Fisher hailed three years of the YHA as helping in gradual progress towards 'World Friendships' through the mixing of nationalities in hostels. There would be a welding of a universal family 'wherein all men shall labour for the common good and live in Peace and Happiness'.⁶² In the *Handbook* of the same year, the author Hugh Walpole wrote of the role of the love of beauty in creating universal brotherhood and believed 'it would be a fine thing if Mussolini, Hitler, Ramsay MacDonald and M. Herriot could walk for a fortnight together using the hostels as they go'.⁶³ In 1934, an editorial in *YHA Rucksack* by Schirrmann endorsed the international linkages which built friendships between countries and in the same edition Lord Snell, chairman of the London County Council, which was hosting the Third International Youth Hostel Conference, wrote: 'the conditions under which they meet in the YHs enable these young people from many lands to know and therefore to like each other,

and their mutual goodwill must have its healthy reactions upon international affairs'.⁶⁴ In 1937, George Lansbury, the former Labour leader and a leading pacifist, provided an editorial praising the international role of the YHA and described it as a 'great movement for recreation, appeasement and peace'.⁶⁵ These claims may seem somewhat overblown and naïve with hindsight. However, they reflected a broader social discourse of the 1930s. Groups supporting peace and appeasement were significant. They cut across party and political lines comprising Conservatives, socialists, right-wing anti-urbanists and various religious denominations, including, significantly, Quakers.⁶⁶

In summary, this section has sought to demonstrate that YHA contributors tended to believe that walking, or walking in rural contexts and within the correct organisational ethos, fostered a diversity of benefits for walkers. It promoted various forms of better relationships among walkers and the people they encountered. By contrast, the urban environment represented for the YHA a series of negative values and malign influences. These will now be addressed.

Anti-urbanism

Many of the articulations of anti-urbanism cover more than one theme. It is, therefore, easiest to summarise the principal varieties and then provide examples from the YHA texts. The critique of the city, or more commonly the industrial city, had five elements: it was ugly or sordid and thus aesthetically unpleasing; it represented false values of materialism, luxury or decadence; it was artificial; it was noisy, hurried and hectic; and it represented transience. Implicitly or explicitly, the comparison was made with the countryside or 'nature', which embodied or represented the opposite in a binary divide. The countryside and 'nature' embodied beauty, spiritual values, authenticity, peace, tranquillity and continuity—the last often involving the organic connection between humans and nature.

These themes are particularly common in the writing of Trevelyan and Temple. In ‘This Lovely Earth’, Trevelyan attacks noise and materialism and likens urban living to that of Plato’s cave-dwellers who see only the shadows of the values of life and mistake them for realities. The

‘intolerable waste of modern mechanical life, the grinding, the dazzle and the roar, the intolerable misuse of modern wealth—buying that which satisfies not—and modern mechanical power, pouring out flood waters of unwanted goods to encumber and defile the ground’ is contrasted with ‘the eternal truth and beauty of rock and dale, falling water and whispering woodland, green fields and flitting birds and boundless sky and sea’.⁶⁷

In 1936 he wrote:

‘The Youth Hostels Association releases man from the machine at least for his holidays and puts him and his mind and body back into the old healthy relationship to nature. We enable him to satisfy instincts that are atrophied in the city, where that atrophy causes half the unrest and misery and nervous trouble of modern life.’⁶⁸

This reprised a claim in the first *YHA Rucksack* that the YHA offered relief for those ‘cramped all year long in the sordid confines of the modern city’.⁶⁹ In the introduction to Coburn’s history of the YHA, he claims: ‘the physiological ailments of our time, our discontent and failure to accept and enjoy life, are largely due to this sudden imprisonment of our population in the cities far from all *natural* sights and sounds.’⁷⁰ In his address to the

National Council in 1939, Temple claims that walking is the real way one ought to travel and 'it is only the wretched hurry of these days that makes it difficult'. He describes civilisation as 'absurdly complicated' and that 'getting out of our urban and mechanised lives into the great spaces gives you a better proportion and the troubles of life seem to be rather small and one's mind has greater fitness for dealing with them'.⁷¹

Baron makes a similar statement in the first *Handbook*: one of the aims of the YHA 'is a return to simpler standards of living, for such a movement "back to the land" offers a relief . . . from the hurried, superficial and expensive mode of life in which industrial civilisation has entangled us'.⁷² An obituary of Major in 1966 cited an earlier interview with him when he stated: 'I ask myself what urge there was within me towards this work. Primarily it was my own revolt against the town and its squalid urbanization then it was a vision (after World War 1) of a happier world of young people'.⁷³

In addition to prominent YHA figures, other contributors shared similar views. Baden-Powell spoke of the 'artificial atmosphere' of the towns and Rogers commended the YHA for giving young people 'born in the smoke and crash, an opportunity to see Nature as their forefathers saw her before she was besmirched by 19th century industrialism'.⁷⁴ Schirrmann attacked the routinised nature of the office and factory and 'the dusty, smoky, stony desert of the towns' and 'far from the artificial, smart world of the city, with its mechanised industry, its racing and chasing after supposed happiness, there outside in the Kingdom of green things is another world to be found which offers peace and recreation'.⁷⁵ Smythe believed that the YHA reduced the risk of slavery 'to comforts and luxuries of the mechanical age' and Powys argued that 'it is urban life that fosters superficial human relationships'.⁷⁶

As mentioned above, the anti-urbanism in the YHA was manifest in the wider context of concern about urban and suburban encroachment of the 1930s. Explicit reference was

made to Williams-Ellis's 'octopus' in a two-part parable involving a chivalrous attack on the octopus and a tribute to the Ferguson Gang.⁷⁷ In the 1934 *Handbook*, Temple hoped that the organisation will become strong enough 'to resist the deprivations of the creators of tea-gardens, the speculative builders, the purveyors of petrol, the advertising agents and all others who think that the value of a glorious view is primarily commercial'.⁷⁸ In 1935, Massingham added his attack on 'ribbon development'⁷⁹ and the speculative builder and Hammond claimed that

a hundred years ago in the excitement of revolution we forgot to learn from Nature and in the pursuit of rapid wealth threw up ugly and squalid towns. Those towns, in the excitement of another revolution, are now spreading their spoilt civilisation further and further over the countryside.⁸⁰

The most florid contribution came from Nancy Price, the founder of the People's National Theatre:

'commercialism creeps ever higher up the valley: the pipe and cement-man has invaded it, scabs of bungaloid growth are spreading everywhere, even the great hills are threatened. If we do not rouse and guard the gate, we shall find the petrol station, the cinema, the American store and insistent bungalow in the quiet places, instead of an arcanum.'⁸¹

Reflections and conclusion

Reading the contributions to YHA publications, one feels these are statements of self-evident truths or articles of faith. What I mean by this is that the claims for the benefits and values of

the countryside or countryside walking and the malign nature of the urban are not hypotheses to be tested empirically. Many of the leading members of the YHA cited above were Oxbridge-educated with a background in history or classics, representing a stratum in English society that was often hostile to, or dismissive of, industrialism and commerce.⁸² Not being philistines, it seems unlikely that they thought towns and cities could not offer spiritual, aesthetic or other forms of reward through museums, architecture and art. This leads one to emphasise again that it is the industrial town and city, or aspects of them, which are under attack. What does seem to be beyond the imagination or comprehension of the writers considered is that the industrial landscape or the pastimes of the industrial city could provide benefits. For example, industrial archaeology can have its appeal or one can find physical or mental relief in an urban walk.⁸³ That cities provided various forums for the satisfaction of needs, including sporting venues or pubs for social intercourse, seems to be discounted. This denial draws from and extends beyond the strong strain of asceticism, frugality and the temperance tradition within the YHA influenced by Quakerism. These strains and traditions are perhaps overlain with snobbery despite the inclusive claims of the YHA. Such snobbishness is indicated in the attitudes of Leonard, shared by some others in the movement, who disliked the vulgar and sybaritic tendencies of seaside holidays. As the prolific journalist and author of guidebooks, S. P. B. Mais phrased it, through the YHA 'we can avoid the bandstand and the pier and the overcrowded beach'.⁸⁴

If any of this critique holds good, it remains to be explained why these sentiments seem so pervasive and presumably struck a chord with much of the membership. It can be argued that a long-standing and powerful ideology of anti-urbanism and critique of industrialism was reinforced and given a new impetus through a contemporary concern over urban encroachment and the expansion of car use. There were real and (literally) concrete threats to the countryside. For some the countryside represented something genuine, stable

and meaningful only a decade after a major and destabilising conflict in a period that also faced the uncertainties and insecurities of domestic recession, class tensions and international imperial rivalries.

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Notes

¹ YHA archive, Cadbury Research Library, University of Birmingham (hereafter YHA arch.), Y430001. An epigram of G. M. Trevelyan, the President of the YHA, *Handbook* (1934), p. 8. The article relates to the YHA of England and Wales. After a short period of unity, the Scottish YHA was organisationally separate from late 1931.

² Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (London, 1973).

³ Speech opening the Science Debate at the Labour Party's Annual Conference, Scarborough, 1963, in Harold Wilson, *Purpose in Politics: Selected Speeches* (London, 1964), p. 27.

⁴ M. J. Wiener, *English Culture and the Decline of the Industrial Spirit, 1850–1980* (Cambridge, 1981).

⁵ See ch. 10 of T. Linehan, *British Fascism 1918–39: Parties, Ideology and Culture* (Manchester, 2000); R. Moore-Colyer, 'Towards "Mother Earth": Jorian Jenks, Organicism, the Right and the British Union of Fascists', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 39:3 (2004), 353–371; D. Stone, 'The English Mistery, the BUF and the Dilemmas of British Fascism', *Journal of Modern History*, 75:2 (2003), 336–358; D. Stone, 'The Far Right and the Back-to-the-Land Movement', in J. V. Gottlieb and T. P. Linehan (eds), *The Culture of Fascism: Visions of the Far Right in Britain* (London, 2004); F. Trentmann, 'Civilisation and its Discontents: English Neo-Romanticism and the Transformation of

Anti-Modernism in Twentieth-Century Western Culture', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 29:4 (1994), 583–625.

⁶ Linehan, *British Fascism 1918–39*, ch. 10.

⁷ Many of the participants on the programme identify the rural with a settled community centred on the pub, the village church and local school. One suspects the reality is often different. See M. Bunce, 'Reproducing Rural Idylls', pp. 14–30 and C. Brace, 'Rural Mappings', pp. 49–72 in P. Cloke (ed.), *Country Visions* (Harlow, 2003) for representations of the rural.

⁸ It is no coincidence that an influential genre of Afro-Caribbean-inspired British music is labelled 'urban'. Additionally, commentators have noted the overwhelming 'whiteness' of recreational users of the countryside. See K. Spracklen, *Whiteness and Leisure* (Basingstoke, 2013).

⁹ For more details of these two publications, see below.

¹⁰ London Conference 10 April 1930 cited in H. Maurice-Jones and L. Porter, *The Spirit of YHA* (Private publication, 2008), p. 45. For a history of the YHA's early years, see O. Coburn, *Youth Hostel Story: The First Twenty Years in England and Wales* (London, 1950) and H. Maurice-Jones and L. Porter, *Eighty Years of Youth Hostelling* (London, 2010).

¹¹ YHA arch., Y440001. Figures from Annual Report (1939).

¹² In the 1930s, an average of forty organisations affiliated to the YHA. They included educational groups, 'preservationist' groups, rambling federations, the HF, CHA and the Cyclists' Touring Club.

¹³ See R. Snape, 'The New Leisure, Voluntarism and Social Reconstruction in Inter-War Britain', *Contemporary British History*, 29:1 (2015), 51–83 and R. Snape and H. Pussard, 'Theorisations of Leisure in Inter-War Britain', *Leisure Studies*, 32:1 (2013), 1–18.

¹⁴ As Snape has noted, the conceptualisation of citizenship and construction of citizens in this period drew on a diversity of intellectual traditions including socialism, idealism, progressive liberalism, cultural conservatism and classical Athenian models. Snape, 'The New Leisure'.

¹⁵ For details of political interventions and support for the unemployed by the YHA, see M. Cunningham, 'Ethos and Politics in the Youth Hostels Association (YHA) in the 1930s', *Contemporary British History*, forthcoming.

¹⁶ A. Olechnowicz, 'Unemployed Workers, "Enforced Leisure" and Education for "the Right Use of Leisure" in Britain in the 1930s', *Labour History Review*, 70:1 (2005): 27–52.

¹⁷ Honorary Secretary, then Secretary, 'Jack' Catchpool had links to many other organisations. Vice-President William Temple, Archbishop of York, was a member of the Conference on Christian Politics, Economics and Citizenship (COPEC), which 'emphasised Christian morality, outdoor activities, hobby societies, and social service' as acceptable uses of leisure time. Snape and Pussard, 'Theorisations of Leisure', p. 11.

¹⁸ Cited in I. Zweiniger-Bargielowska, 'Keep Fit and Play the Game: George VI, Outdoor Recreation and Social Cohesion in Interwar Britain', *Cultural and Social History*, 11:1 (2014), 111–129, 119, emphasis added.

¹⁹ Richard Overy, *The Morbid Age: Britain Between the Wars* (London, 2009). The subtitle of the paperback edition of 2010 was *Britain and the Crisis of Civilization, 1919–1939*.

²⁰ Clough Williams-Ellis, *England and the Octopus* (London, 1928) and *Britain and the Beast* (London, 1937). Contributors to the latter who appear in this article include Patrick Abercrombie, C. E. M. Joad, S. P. B. Mais, H. J. Massingham and G. M. Trevelyan. See D. Matless, *Landscape and Englishness* (London, 1998); J. Burchardt, *Paradise Lost: Rural Idyll and Social Change Since 1800* (London, 2002), ch. 8–10; J. Gardiner, *The Thirties: A Social History* (London, 2010), ch. 10.

²¹ Joad's *Charter for Ramblers* received a very positive review in *YHA Rucksack* 2: 2 (1934), p. 28. YHA arch., Y500001.

²² On Gardiner, see M. Jefferies and M. Tyldesley (eds), *Rolf Gardiner: Folk, Nature and Culture in Inter-War Britain* (Farnham, 2010); Matless, *Landscape and Englishness*; Stone, 'The Far Right'. On Massingham, see R. Moore-Colyer, 'A Voice Clamouring in the Wilderness: H. J. Massingham (1888–1952) and Rural England', *Rural History*, 13:2 (2002), 199–224. For connections, see R. Moore-Colyer, 'Back to Basics: Rolf Gardiner, H. J. Massingham and "A Kinship in Husbandry"', *Rural History*, 12:1 (2001), 85–108.

²³ See ch. 4 of M. Reed, *Rebels of the Soil: The Rise of the Global Organic Food and Farming Movement* (Abingdon, 2010) and Moore-Colyer, 'Back to Basics.'

²⁴ YHA arch., Y500001. H. J. Massingham, 'Land-Ho!', *YHA Rucksack*, 3:3 (1936), pp. 45–46.

²⁵ This unconsciously echoes a reference by Valentine Cunningham found after writing this section about H. V. Morton's 1927 work *In Search of England*. 'Industry he skirts; the towns he prefers to investigate are the unabrasively nice old ones, Bath, Durham, York, Lincoln, Stratford.' V. Cunningham, *British Writers of the Thirties* (Oxford, 1988), p. 228.

²⁶ This can be contrasted with a trend in recent literature in England on nature which often takes as its subject flatter, less 'dramatic' landscapes. For example, Moran has noted that Mark Cocker, Roger Deakin, Richard Mabey and Robert Macfarlane have written about the fens. J. Moran, 'A Cultural History of the New Nature Writing', *Literature and History*, 23:1 (2014), 49–63, 52.

²⁷ T. A. Leonard is a significant figure in the history of outdoor holidays. Pimlott's classic history of the English holiday gives him pioneer status with Thomas Cook and Billy Butlin. J. A. R. Pimlott, *The Englishman's Holiday: A Social History* (Hassocks, [1947] 1976).

²⁸ YHA arch., Y500001. T. A. Leonard, 'The Freedom of the Fells', *YHA Rucksack*, 5:3 (1937), p. 65.

²⁹ R. Taylor, *The Pioneering Years of the Youth Hostels Movement on Merseyside, 1929–1936* (Liverpool, 1975), p. 5.

³⁰ YHA arch., Y500001. Obituary, *YHA Rucksack*, 13:1 (1945), pp. 2–3.

³¹ Entry by A. Lunn, H. C. G. Matthew and B. Harrison (eds), *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004), vol. 51, p. 458. On the attractions of mountains and their relationship to the concept of the Sublime, see Robert Macfarlane, *Mountains of the Mind: A History of a Fascination* (London, 2003), ch. 3. See also n. 50 below.

³² YHA arch., Y500001. N. R. Tillett, 'East Anglia', *YHA Rucksack* 4:2 (1936), 30–34, 30.

³³ Melanie Tebbutt, 'Rambling and Manly Identity in Derbyshire's Dark Peak, 1880s–1920s', *The Historical Journal*, 49:4 (2006): 125–153; John K. Walton, 'The Northern Rambler: Recreational Walking and the Popular Politics of Industrial England, from Peterloo to the 1930s', *Labour History Review*, 78:3 (2013), 243–268. The subjects of these articles are not YHA members, however the same attachments may hold.

³⁴ See ch. 5 of S. O'Connell, *The Car and British Society: Class, Gender and Motoring 1896–1939* (Manchester, 1998).

³⁵ YHA arch., Y500001. R. Schirrmann, 'Departure and Return', *YHA Rucksack*, 3:1 (1935), p. 3, emphasis in original. Temple claimed that the beauty of nature can only be seen by those who walk (YHA arch., Y430001. Foreword, *Handbook* (1934), p. 4). Leonard appealed to cyclists to go walking as well and be free from 'the monotony of the machine' ('The Freedom of the Fells', p. 66). The Merseyside Region had wanted a clause 'especially [for] those on foot' added to the YHA objective cited at n. 9 above.

³⁶ A complete set is held at the Cadbury Research Library, University of Birmingham.

³⁷ Herbert Gatliff Papers, Bodleian Library, University of Oxford (hereafter HGP), box 105. Trevelyan, Address to National Council, London, 2–3 April 1938, n.pag.

³⁸ YHA arch., Y430001. Trevelyan, *Handbook* (1931), p. 3.

³⁹ YHA arch., Y500001. Trevelyan, editorial, *YHA Rucksack* 7:1 (1939), p. 5, emphasis added.

⁴⁰ YHA arch., Y430001. W. Temple, *Handbook* (1934), p. 4 ; YHA arch., Y500001. *YHA Rucksack*, 7:3 (1939), p. 3.

⁴¹ YHA arch., Y500001. L. Powys, 'The Oldest Religion', *YHA Rucksack*, 3:2 (1935), p. 21.

⁴² YHA arch., Y430001. B. Baron, 'The Aim of the Association', *Handbook* (1931), p. 7.

⁴³ YHA arch., Y430001. R. Baden-Powell, introduction, *Handbook* (1937), p. 3.

⁴⁴ Various writers and philosophers have attested to the link between walking and thinking. See R. Solnit, *Wanderlust: A History of Walking* (London, 2001).

⁴⁵ YHA arch., Y500001. R. S. Rogers, 'Quo Vadis?', *YHA Rucksack* 2:3 (1934), p. 37.

⁴⁶ YHA arch., Y430001. Temple, foreword, *Handbook*, 1934, p. 4.

⁴⁷ The YHA was associated with Spartan conditions and regulations included strict 'lights out' times, temperance and the doing of chores by members.

⁴⁸ YHA arch., Y500001. J. E. Walsh, editorial, *YHA Rucksack* 1: 4 (1933), p. 49.

⁴⁹ YHA arch., Y500001. D. Sheppard, 'Is Hiking Morally Dangerous?', *YHA Rucksack* 4:4 (1936), p. 81.

⁵⁰ This reflects the religious, philanthropic or social-democratic backgrounds of many activists, who stressed ideas about community, fellowship and service. They also encouraged the individual to think about how s/he was linked to and had responsibilities to the collective. Similar ideas of improvement were found in other groups, e.g. the Clarion rambles.

⁵¹ Smythe was a close associate of Arnold Lunn, the prominent skier who became a Catholic conservative and supporter of Franco and Mussolini. However, I can find no information regarding Smythe's political orientation. Right-wing sentiments were common among mountaineers in the UK and in other parts of Europe. The physicality involved, the testing of the body and the element of conquest appealed to nationalistic and fascist groups. However, there does not seem to be a connection to right-wing politics of those walkers in the YHA who had a preference for mountains as venues for walking or as landscapes.

⁵² YHA arch., Y500001. F. Smythe, 'The Youth Hostel Movement', *YHA Rucksack* 3:4 (1935), p. 1.

⁵³ Rogers, 'Quo Vadis?'.

⁵⁴ YHA arch., Y700003–5. Trevelyan, address to National Council, London, 2–3 April 1938.

⁵⁵ The fourth aim is discussed at n. 72 below.

⁵⁶ Baron, 'The Aim of the Association', emphasis added.

⁵⁷ Coburn, *Youth Hostel Story*, p. 176.

⁵⁸ M. Freeman, 'Fellowship, Service and the "Spirit of Adventure": The Religious Society of Friends and the Outdoors Movement in Britain c. 1900–1950', *Quaker Studies*, 14 (2009): 72–92 (<http://eprints.gla.ac.uk/29001>).

⁵⁹ YHA arch., Y43001. J. L. Hammond, foreword, *Handbook* (1935), p. 10. Hammond is cited by Wiener (*English Culture*, pp. 85–86) as an intellectual with anti-modernist tendencies.

⁶⁰ The relations with Germany will not be pursued here. However, it is worth noting that the youth hostel movement started in Germany and many individuals in the English movement had travelled, studied or worked in Germany.

⁶¹ YHA arch., Y500001. Editorial, *YHA Rucksack* 1:3 (1933), p. 34.

⁶² YHA arch., Y500001. Claude Fisher, 'To What Great Purpose?', *YHA Rucksack* 1:5 (1933), pp. 65–66.

⁶³ YHA arch., Y430001. Hugh Walpole, 'A Foreword', *Handbook* (1933), p. 5. Walpole was another resident of the Lake District and one dedication of the novel *Rogue Herries* was 'in love of Cumberland.' H. Walpole, *Rogue Herries* (London, [1930] 2008), np.

⁶⁴ YHA arch., Y500001. *YHA Rucksack* 2:4 (1934), p. 53.

⁶⁵ YHA arch., Y500001. G. Lansbury, Editorial, *YHA Rucksack* 5:1 (1937), p. 1.

⁶⁶ For example, the two leading figures in the League of Nations Union were the Conservative Robert Cecil and the Quaker and Labour MP, Philip Noel-Baker. Many Quakers volunteered for the Friends' Ambulance Unit in the First World War as pacifists. The Reverend Dick Sheppard cited above was the founder of the Peace Pledge Union. Tom Stephenson, Ramblers' Association activist who was on the YHA NEC in the late 1930s, was jailed during the First World War for being a conscientious objector.

⁶⁷ YHA arch., Y500001. 'This Lovely Earth', *YHA Rucksack* 1:3 (1933), p. 35.

⁶⁸ HGP, box 92. Address to National Council, Oxford, 28–29 March 1936, p. 4.

⁶⁹ YHA arch., Y500001. *YHA Rucksack* 1:1 (1932) p. 3.

⁷⁰ Coburn, *Youth Hostel Story*, p. 2, emphasis added.

⁷¹ HGP, box 105. Address to National Council, York, 25–26 March 1939, n.pag. Note this also emphasises the spiritual and mental benefits of the countryside.

⁷² Baron, 'The Aim of the Association', p. 7.

⁷³ YHA arch., Y610001–4. 'John W. Major', *Youth Hosteller*, May 1966, pp. 6–7.

⁷⁴ Baden-Powell, introduction, *Handbook* (1937); Rogers, 'Quo Vadis?'.

⁷⁵ Schirrmann, 'Departure and Return'.

⁷⁶ Smythe, 'The Youth Hostel Movement'; Powys, 'The Oldest Religion'.

⁷⁷ The Ferguson Gang was a group of affluent women who used *noms de guerre* and helped to fund the National Trust. The parable is anonymous, possibly by Trevelyan. YHA arch., Y500001.

‘Fragment of a Medieval Romance’ *YHA Rucksack* 5:1 (1937): 2–3; ‘The Knight of the Ferguson Gang and How He Is Thwarting the Octopus’, *YHA Rucksack* 5:2 (1937): 33–34.

⁷⁸ Temple, foreword, *Handbook* (1937).

⁷⁹ Massingham, ‘Land-Ho!’

⁸⁰ Hammond, foreword, *Handbook* (1935).

⁸¹ YHA arch., Y500001. N. Price, ‘A Vagabond by Choice’, *YHA Rucksack* 4:4 (1936), pp. 86–87.

Wiener (*English Culture*, pp. 88–90) has noted how such malign developments were often associated with American influence.

⁸² The Quaker families, the Cadburys, the Rowntrees and the Sturges, were influential in the YHA both nationally and locally. Being involved in commerce, they seemed less likely to share these dispositions. John Cadbury became the third chairman of the NEC in 1939. Coincidentally or not, he did not contribute to the sentiments discussed above.

⁸³ The urban as a venue for walking and the rewards of urban landscapes are much more common themes in contemporary literature. See, in particular, the work of Iain Sinclair. Both scholarly and more popular texts on walking often include reflections on urban walking. See Solnit, *Wanderlust*; R. Macfarlane, *The Old Ways: A Journey on Foot* (London, 2012); S. McKay, *Ramble On* (London, 2012); C. Speakman, *Walk! A Celebration of Striding Out* (Ilkley, 2011).

⁸⁴ YHA arch., Y500001. *YHA Rucksack* 1:1 (1932), p. 5.